12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

THE SETTING

The Mundurucú Indians live in the State of Pará, Brazil, in a region east of the Tapajós River between 6° and 7½° S lat. Other members of the tribe, now largely assimilated into the rural Brazilian population of the Amazon Valley, live north and west of this region on the lower reaches of the Tapajós River and on the Maué-Assú, Secundurý, and Abacaxís rivers; the latter three are tributaries of a channel of the Madeira River.

The Mundurucú are usually classified as a Tupian-speaking group, although the linguistic relationship has been described by Curt Nimuendajú as remote.[1] Within this general Tupian language family, however, the Mundurucú language has its closest genetic links with the speech of the Curuaya Indians of the Xingú River. The affinity between Curuaya and Mundurucú was sufficiently close for Rev. Albert Kruse, an anthropologically minded missionary, to classify the former as a regional subgroup of the latter.[2] This classification, and also Kruse's identification of the Nambikuara as the "Juruena Mundurucú" are erroneous.[3] The Mundurucú originally were an autonomous tribe that had little or no political relations with other native groups. Their territory at the time of their first recorded contact with the whites in the latter part of the eighteenth century was in the described region east of the Tapajós; their occupation of the waters of the lower Madeira and Tapajós rivers was the result of a migration that occurred after their contact.

The present-day Mundurucú population consists of about 1,250 people, a considerable decline from past times. Although the population figures of early explorers and chroniclers are generally too high, we may get some idea

[1] Nimuendajú, 1938, p. 975.
[2] Kruse, 1934, p. 51.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

131 Tapajós in 1779, which located the "Mondruci nation" on
175 the "Rio Vermelha," probably either the Cadiriri or Cururú River.[4] Also, although Martius was personally acquainted only with the Mundurucú living between the Tapajós and Madeira, he confirmed the upper Tapajós to be their area of greatest strength in 1819.[5]

175 The Mundurucú of the upper Tapajós River remained
648 relatively isolated during the early contact period, al-
[166] though large numbers of migrants from these villages moved north to the proximity of the white settlements. This population shift, caused by the lure of manufactured articles, was facilitated by the rapid decimation of the intervening Indian tribes. The complementary, and frequently identical, agencies of colonization and catechization had broken and absorbed those groups, such as the populous Tapajó, which had occupied areas near the Am-
[165] azon, and disease had reduced the ranks of the surviving societies. Mundurucú warfare aided the process. For example, Serra located the Hiauain tribe in an area several days' travel above the first rapids of the Tapajós in 1779,[6] but in 1817 Manoel Ayres de Casal placed them on the east bank of the lower Tapajós, to where they had fled from Mundurucú war parties.[7] The net effect of these demographic changes was to provide the Mundurucú with uninterrupted avenues of access to trade facilities.

175 The Mundurucú who moved into the lower Tapajós val-
648 ley soon entered into close relations with the whites. The
797 mission of Santa Cruz was established in 1803 and was followed by other missions to the Mundurucú at Boim and Pinhel, all on the lower Tapajós.[8] The inhabitants of these

[4] Almeida Serra, 1869, pp. 3-5.
[5] Martius, 1867, p. 394.
[6] Almeida Serra, 1869, p. 3.
[7] Ayres de Casal, 1845, p. 232.
[8] Martius, 1867, p. 395.

12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

rubber trade, and further contact was provided by the establishment of the mission of Bacabal on the upper Tapajós in 1872. The Silesian priest in charge attempted to protect the Indians from the traders and is said by Tocantins to have told them, "My children, you owe nothing to the contrabandist regatões; now you will work only for yourselves, your women, and your children." [44] The priest's technique for protecting the Indians was, quite simply, to monopolize their trade. The rubber interests were powerful, however, and in 1876 he was dismissed upon complaint of the businessmen of Itaituba, and the mission was abandoned.

Concurrent with the rise and fall of the mission of Bacabal, increasing numbers of permanent houses of commerce were established on the banks of the upper Tapajós and its tributaries. The importance of rubber had resulted in regular exploitation of the resource, and the system of establishing proprietary rights to rubber regions was extended to the upper Tapajós. This was done through grants by the state or purchase from it, or by simple squatter rights perpetuated by force and registry on the tax rolls. Since that time, the basic social and economic organization for the exploitation of rubber has changed little, although the violence of the boom days has subsided and the Tapajós has declined into an economically stagnant, poverty-stricken backwater.

The Mundurucú became absorbed into the patron-client system and they also came into closer proximity to the whites, who poured into the region as the rubber boom accelerated. Although the larger part of the Indian population remained in the savannah villages and collected rubber for only brief periods, there was a steady egress of people to the major streams. Tocantins states that many

[44] Tocantins, 1877, p. 149.

12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

Mundurucú were also being pressed into household servitude by the whites,[84] a practice common to all of Amazonia at that time. Many Mundurucú accompanied their patrons to work in different regions, and others remained all year at their rubber avenues in the valley of the Tapajós. Illustrative of this spread of Mundurucú over the upper Tapajós region are Coudreau's figures, which give the Mundurucú population of the banks of the upper Tapajós in 1895 as 173; of the Juruena-Bararaty rivers, 72; and of the São Manoel River, 49.[85] All these scattered Mundurucú were living in Brazilian-type houses with an average population of ten in each house. This process was obviously a continuation on a local scale of the earlier spread of the Mundurucú to the lower Tapajós and the Madeira tributaries.

The population of the savannah villages decreased during this period because of death from disease and loss of people to the river banks. However, the villages themselves persisted as strong social units. Two factors are mainly responsible for this: First, the chieftain, instead of losing function, actually became more important, and for some time the villages became politically more tightly integrated. The chief now had the additional position as intermediary with the white man and as such was the source of trade goods; the modern Mundurucú still speak of the days when "chiefs were strong and bought everything for the people." After the patrons became firmly established and gained influence among the Indians, they began to appoint their own "chiefs," frequently without regard for the traditional system of inheritance. In time, as will be seen, this undermined the chieftaincy and became a source of conflict. Second, warfare, for both mercenary

[84] *Ibid.*, p. 148.
[85] Coudreau, 1897, p. 186.

12:Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

175 797 little progress was made in attracting the Indians to the mission. The priests made the rounds of the villages preaching and baptizing, and children were recruited for the school, but such contacts were sporadic.

175 439 797 In the late 1920's, the world price of rubber rose somewhat as a result of export restrictions imposed on the planters of British Malaya, and the attraction of higher returns caused the Indians to become more engaged in trade. This meant, of course, that more Indians came into contact with the mission in its new role as a trading post. The regatões still offered competition, but the Mundurucú, who knew nothing of weights and prices, nonetheless learned that they received a greater return for their rubber and manioc flour from the missionaries. They came to tap rubber in increasing numbers along the Cururú, and many left the savannah villages for all-year residence on its shores. By the 1930's, permanent villages began to grow up on the river banks. This population shift proceeded so rapidly that by 1950 there were only about 360 Mundurucú left on the savannahs, whereas the Cururú population numbered 700.

[361] [166] [162]

175 439 657 Of less importance in attracting a permanent population to the Cururú was the founding on that river of the Mundurucú post of the Brazilian Indian Protection Service in 1941. This post followed the establishment of an Indian reservation in 1939 that included most of the country lying inland from the Tapajós and bounded by the Cururú and Tropas rivers. Traders were barred from the reservation but since no inspection points were set up on the Tropas, Cabitutú, and Cadiriri rivers, the Tapajós River patrons and some regatões were still able to visit the savannahs. However, the Cururú, where the bulk of the Mundurucú population now lives, was effectively closed

12:Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

to outside commerce, and a trade monopoly is now held by the mission and the post.

The population shift to the Cururú has had profound effects on Mundurucú society. Before 1930 there were fifteen villages in the interior region between the Tropas and the Cururú. Today there are only seven, for the eight villages nearest to the Cururú were abandoned after their populations had been steadily drained to the banks of the river. On the Cururú, there are no traditional villages. There is no men's house, and the architecture is local Brazilian. Six of the seven remaining savannah villages maintain the men's house and a modified form of the native dwelling.

Except for the village of Cauí, established in the 1930's by a few conservative Indians dissatisfied with life on the Cururú, all contemporary savannah villages are two to three days' march from the shores of the Cururú. The contact between the two populations is diminishing; they trade in different places, their way of life has become differentiated, and they feel themselves to be different. The Cururú River people ridicule the *campineiro*, the Brazilian term for a dweller of the savannahs, because "he has no clothes," "he is lazy," "his houses are dirty," and "he sleeps with a fire under his hammock at night." Actually, such ridicule reflects a sense of inferiority among the Cururú-River Mundurucú, because they at the same time respect the campineiro for his greater knowledge of the traditional culture, his supposedly still-existent warlike proclivities, and the fear that he may be a powerful sorcerer. The missionaries have inspired many of the stereotypes of the campineiro as an uncouth backwoodsman in order to persuade the people to abandon their native practices and accept missionary instruction. The campineiro, on the other

12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

hand, refers to the people living on the Cururú as *pariwat*, or "foreigners," because they live like the Brazilians. However, his feelings toward the Cururú people are not inspired by the fear and alienation felt by the latter. Rather, he is puzzled and chagrined that they remain aloof from him and will not accept him, although they are all Mundurucú.

The split within the tribe occurred only during the past three decades, but it has contributed to a decrease in migration from the remaining savannah villages to the Cururú. People are still leaving the savannahs, but usually to move to the Tapajós or to the lower reaches of the streams on the headwaters of which they live. The ambivalent attitude of the Cururú people makes that river decidedly unattractive to them.

CHRONOLOGY

For purposes of greater clarity, the history of the contact between the Mundurucú and the whites can be conveniently divided into four distinct periods. These are based on significant changes in the structure of Brazilian-Mundurucú relations.

1770–1795.—During this period, the warlike Mundurucú came into contact with the Portuguese colonists and directed attacks against them in the region along the Amazon River between Gurupá, on the east, and the lower Madeira River, on the west. The first Mundurucú settling of the latter area took place during these years and was probably motivated by the desire to obtain trade goods. In 1795, a punitive expedition against the villages of the east side of the upper Tapajós River, the original Mundurucú territory, ended hostilities.

1795–1850.—The Mundurucú, at peace with the whites,

12:Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

241 311 themselves and yield for several years in abandoned gardens. Other plants, such as timbó and some fruit trees are also productive long after the garden goes out of regular cultivation. The reason for planting a field only twice is obvious when one considers that bitter manioc matures in about eight months on the first planting and in more than a year on the second in the already "tired" soil. A third planting would yield little and, also, as the local Brazilians say, "the jungle takes over by that time." Fortunately, there is adequate virgin forest or old second-growth forest available to meet the needs of the population, and they simply clear new gardens. The usual system is for each man to clear land annually and thus have one garden in first planting and another in the second planting. But men often feel that they have adequate crops and let a year pass without clearing forest; this is especially common if a housemate has a new garden.

The rapid exhaustion of the soil and the plentifulness of [423] forest land explains the absence of concepts of private or corporate property in land among the Munduruc[illegible]. When the best forest soils within a convenient range are exhausted, the village moves a short distance to the prox- [361] imity of fresh soil. But the Munduruc[illegible] build new villages every ten years whether nearby garden land is scarce or [166] not, and the present depleted population may shift within a one-mile radius over a forty- to fifty-year period. When conveniently situated forest is exhausted, they merely move out of this orbit to a new locale a few miles away, near which they remain for another long period. Villages probably moved somewhat longer distances in time past, when their populations exceeded two hundred people and pressure on the land was correspondingly greater.

423 The same causes that operate to make individual property in land meaningless apply on the family and village

12:Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

ever, and the village plaza and the surrounding underbrush become dense and the lair of snakes and scorpions. As a result of this rapid decay, a new village is built every ten years, but, since the people live in the old one while building the new, it is usually constructed nearby. The remains of four old villages, representing about forty years of occupation, can be discerned within a half mile of the present location of Cabruá. Gradual exhaustion of the more favored forest lands and the necessity of walking ever farther to the gardens eventually forces a move to the vicinity of fertile soil. Accordingly, the people of Cabruá decided during our stay to build a village on a site some two miles away, and they planned to start construction during the following rainy season.

The village of Cabruá and its households have suffered greatly from depopulation because of disease and emigration. Although many of its residents had not made definite plans, at the time of our departure the new village probably would have had no more than three households, for several people were considering migration to the Tropas and Cabitutú rivers. At its site in 1953, Cabruá had five dwelling houses. One was deserted, for the previous inhabitant had lost a son through an accident, and this was interpreted by the shamans to be the result of the family's inattention to their ritual duty to the sacred trumpets. The family left for another village before the trumpet spirits could exact further revenge.

The household of the chief included 17 people, and the largest house unit of the village had a population of 26. The other two houses of the village numbered 8 and 16 people. These groups constituted matrilocally-based extended families, although the continual flux and constant loss of population in recent times has disturbed this organization.

12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

the women, but occasionally spiteful remarks are exchanged or a hair-pulling match, usually over a man, occurs. These events provide the grist for conversation for weeks.

Relations between the women of the savannah communities are subjected to an extra, situational strain because of an unequal ratio of the sexes. In the village of Cabruá, for example, there were thirteen mature men and eighteen women; the five unattached females constituted a serious threat to the married women, for they seduced many of the husbands and attempted to induce them to leave their wives. The disproportion between the sexes is promoted by the greater mobility of the male and the structure of savannah-Cururú relations. Young *campineiros* sometimes wander into the Cururú River villages, marry there and settle according to the matrilocal pattern. But fear of witchcraft and long distances from rubber-producing areas inhibit the reverse from taking place. The result is a shortage of husbands in the savannahs and a dearth of wives on the Cururú. Jealousy over sex is rife among savannah women, and mutual hostilities are structured by the support given by the matrilocal extended family.

The nuclear family is not an important social unit in the savannah villages, although it is basic to life in the rubber season, when village and extended family break up to exploit the scattered resource. But during the eight to nine months of annual residence in the villages, the nuclear family has few vital functions. The men's house prevents it from being a consumption unit in the subsistence economy and from being even a co-resident group. And the thoroughgoing division of labor between the sexes delivers the nuclear family from any primary responsibility in the processes of production. Husband and wife occa-

12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

182 439 villages of their populations comes from the outside. The quest of the Mundurucú for trade items and the equally intense effort of the traders to obtain increased rubber yields from their Indian customers has steadily drawn the latter deeper in the extraction industry. The limitations placed on their production by rainy-season residence in the savannah villages has, however, proved an obstacle to their expanding demand for trade articles. Many have overcome this block by the simple expedient of remaining in their rubber-avenue homes throughout the year and thus extending the period during which they tap rubber.

The internal factors that ease or make necessary such a move are thus complemented by the pull of trade. Emi- [166] gration is easy. The family already has a house at the rubber avenue which with some patching may make a suitable all-year residence. Many have producing gardens [241] which were originally made to provide food during the dry season, but which can serve equally well during the rains. Since these gardens are commonly in good, black soil, they are actually more desirable than those near the village.

182 166 361 621 Individual nuclear families sometimes move immediately from village life into isolated existence. This is, of course, almost always true of fugitive sorcerers. But the desire for sociability and economic coöperation commonly motivates the family to settle with or adjacent to other Mundurucú who preceded them in the migration. Or a small group of nuclear families that customarily resides together in the dry season may leave village life together. 182 478 621 These clusters of families help each other in hunting, gardening, and manioc processing, and they also pool their resources to buy a copper pan to toast farinha. Since they generally produce more rubber than they did as savannah residents, they also have the purchasing power to buy a

12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

canoe and firearms. Fishing is easier with watercraft and solitary hunting more effective by firearms. Both may be bought by the individualized labor of rubber production, and both further free the individual of his dependence on a larger group.

The net effect of the social processes currently affecting the Mundurucú is to scatter the population into semi-isolated and economically independent units. When the now middle-aged and old people die, the process will probably accelerate and the savannah villages will pass out of existence. The families will presumably settle, as all now do in the dry season and several throughout the year, on the waters of the Cadiriri, Cabitutú, and Tropas rivers. Those on the former two rivers will no doubt be customers of the post of Sae Cinza and the residents of the latter will be clients of the patrons of Caroçal and São Martinho. Trips to the trader's store and increased use of canoes will allow the residents of each river to maintain frequent relations with each other, but the long distances between the streams will propably inhibit similar communication between their inhabitants. Beyond the membership of the hamlets in which small groups of nuclear families congregate, the only more inclusive form of economic interdependences will be that between patron and client. This relationship will probably grow in importance, and the Indians will become more firmly integrated into the loose communities, typical of the Amazon, composed of the trader and his customers.

These predictions are not entirely conjectural, for the projected way of life is essentially that of the Mundurucú who have already migrated to the Tapajós River and its tributaries. The nature of the migration and the following life by the river prohibits the reconstitution of savannah-type villages.

12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

moving out of village life altogether to live in the relative isolation of their rubber avenues. Others have left the Cururú and are found near its mouth on the Tapajós. Not all fission arises from factional splits such as that described. Individual persons and nuclear families are always on the move from one village to another or to permanent residence in the rubber avenue because of unresolved interpersonal conflicts.

These disputes are frequently over women, who are scarce on the Cururú. It has been said that the savannah villages suffer from a shortage of men because of the slow but continuous emigration of the more mobile young males, which results in hostility and competition between the younger females. The opposite situation prevails on the Cururú. There, the young campineiro men who have drifted to the shores of the stream have upset the male-female ratio. The migration of young men from the savannahs to the Cururú has slowed up so much in recent years that the ratio between the sexes may readjust itself. At present, however, the men's excursions generally lead to the married women, and such liaisons cannot be long concealed in small villages. Extramarital sex relations are common in the savannahs also, but there are enough unmarried girls to make female adultery less frequent and competition over women less intense. Correspondingly, there are fewer cases of hostility between men in the savannahs caused by sex.

In addition to the effects of disputes over sorcery and sex, economic causes, such as the growing scarcity of land near the larger villages, are also responsible for social fission. When one's village house gets old it is often more convenient to take up permanent residence near the rubber avenue, especially if one produces sufficient rubber to buy the copper farinha-toasting pan.

12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

166 182 It does not require a particularly strong motive to induce an Indian to leave his village. The villages have lost almost all their bases of cohesion. The considerations of coöperative labor and social organization, which have made the savannah villages continue to function, have now lapsed. The only remaining centripetal factors are the equipment of the farinha shed, bonds of close kinship, and the desire for sociability. The latter two factors are now waning in importance on the Cururú.

182 602 The ties of consanguinity show every evidence of weakening. Sib identity is preserved in the naming system, and moiety exogamy is usually observed in the choice of marriage partners. This, however, is already deteriorating, for there are now some unions between persons of the same [835] moiety, and violations of incest rules in casual sexual relations are much more frequent than in the savannah communities.

Kin ties have suffered in other ways. The circle of kinsmen significant to the individual in his daily social life and in the subsistence economy is constantly shrinking. Thus, an Indian might be able to identify and name a wide range of kinsmen (like the average European), but the fact of relationship is no longer of primary importance in patterns of coöperation, distribution, and interpersonal behavior. The important kinsmen are those who share a residence and join in the labor necessary to provide for the household needs. This group has become progressively [594] smaller on the Cururú, and it can be safely said that the nuclear family is well on the way to becoming the basic socioeconomic unit. It is significant that, while the common form of address on the savannahs is still by kinship [551] term, Mundurucú proper names and, increasingly, Christian names are more generally used on the Cururú.

182 621 The Cururú villages never did achieve stable integra-

/29 cont./

From this relationship of garden and village, and also, of garden and community, there results the relatively slight local stability of the tribal groups, which, however, does not reach the stage of nomadism, and perhaps not even that of seminomadism in the strict sense of the term. In fact, there is a certain amount of group migration resulting from the agrarian situation, since it is the soil that forces the Indian to keep moving on. But these migrations are a slow process which is not strikingly noticeable because the moves from one location

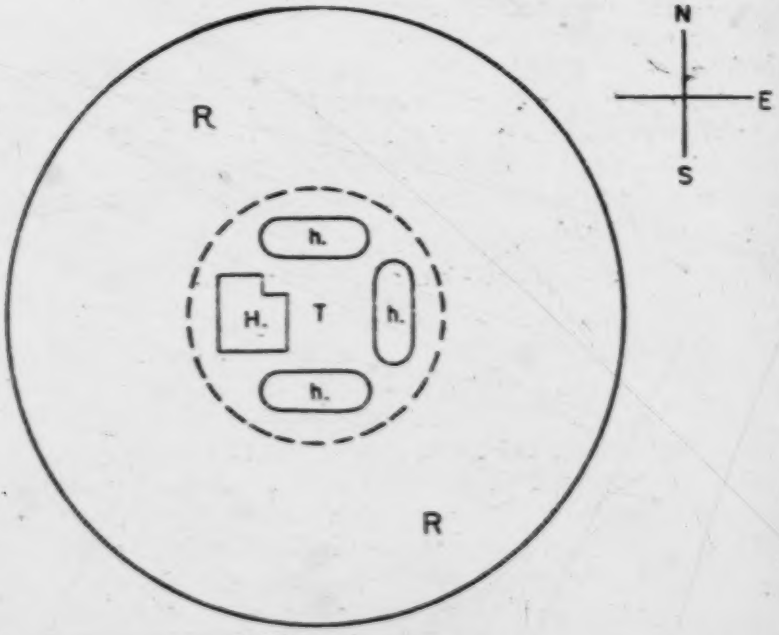

Figure 3. Plan of a Munduruků village
T: plaza; H: hoksa; h: hok-a; R: Garden plots.

/29 cont./

*241 361 166 to another only occur at long intervals, within decades, and because they occur within a certain well-defined area which is precisely the habitat of the tribe. When these moves overshoot the boundaries of the pertinent territory, the causes must usually be sought in other spheres: in wars, pressure by other tribes, or, as is noted among the present-day Mundurkú, in the influences of trade and of rubber gathering. But, in their original and usual sense, these "internal" migrations, that is, these displacements and movements of groups within the area peculiar to the tribe, are based solely on the agrarian conditions mentioned above. Martius had already said of the Tupi of the upper Tapajós, as quoted earlier: "They practice a primitive agriculture, and therefore, they are not nomads in the strict sense of the term; their villages, however, do not remain immutably in the same place." (16) He had, thus, already noted these moves

16. Martius, 1857: 201.

[182] and had recognized the fact that agriculture was responsible for the greater or lesser stability of the Indian within his territory. In fact, the same thing may be said in a concrete way of the Mundurukú. They are not nomads, precisely because of their agriculture. But neither are they entirely stable within their habitat for the same reason—agriculture—which, owing to soil exhaustion, forces them into repeated moves which, in the last analysis, result in slow internal migrations which I have termed intra-territorial /tic/.

/30/

*241 104 IV. Native terminology referring to garden plots and cultivated plants

1) Referring to the garden. (17)

17. The phonetics have been adapted to Portuguese whenever possible. Note the following, however: